

SECTION 5.0 FILING A COMPLAINT OR OTHER INITIATING DOCUMENT

5.1 Case Opening

Case opening procedures will proceed in the traditional manner. Attorneys will continue to tender the filing fees to the Clerk's Office, along with an original and copy of the complaint or petition and civil cover sheet, and requested service of process forms. The documents will be filed by the court clerk who will collect any applicable fee, issue a receipt, assign the case number and judge, issue process and generate case management orders to the filing attorney for service. Staff will also enter case opening statistical information and party information for that case in CM/ECF. See also [Section 4.1 and 2](#) and [Local Rule 100.4 - Filing Initial Papers With the Court](#).

5.2 Posting Documents

All documents must be converted from their original word processing format to PDF format **before** they can be posted to the CM/ECF system (See [Section 3.4](#) and [Appendix B](#)). Select CIVIL from the top frame blue menu bar on the CM/ECF site.

(a) Initial Pleadings and Service

Selection of CIVIL from the main menu bar will display a menu of Civil Events. To post a complaint (or other initiating document), choose Complaints and Other Initiating Documents from the Initial Pleadings and Service menu.

(b) Complaint

The Complaints and Other Initiating Documents menu will display a list of available complaint type documents. (See [Appendix A](#) for a list of available complaint types.) Select the specific type of complaint being filed. For this example, select "Complaint" and hit "Next."

(c) Case Selection Screen

The system will then ask for the case number. Cases should be entered in the YEAR-NUMBER (yy-####) format. Always include a hyphen between the year and number. If the case number has not been entered correctly, an error screen will appear. After entering the case number, hit "Next".

Note: A hyperlink to the docket sheet is also available on these screens. At any time during the document filing process, a user may click on the underlined case number denoting a hyperlink to the docket sheet.

(d) Select Party Filer Screen

Choose the party filing the complaint by highlighting the name(s). New parties can be added on this screen by choosing the "Add/Create New Party" link. (See also [Section](#)

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[4.3 - Adding Parties](#)). Once the party filer selection is made, hit “Next”.

(e) Filed Against Screen

When posting a complaint event (i.e., an original proceeding, amended complaint, third party complaint, etc.), the user is prompted to select the party the complaint is filed against. Users have the option of selecting fewer than all or individual parties, or by selecting parties by group type. Selecting individual party names will place those names in the docket text. Selection of a group will not place individual names, but will show docket text as to “All Defendants” or “All Plaintiffs.” If the party is not listed, select the “Add/Create New Party” link. (See [Section 4.3](#)) Select the party(s) and hit “Next”.

(f) Link Party Attorney

Users will be required to confirm the party-attorney relationship the first time an attorney files a document on behalf of that party. This is also an opportunity for the user to verify that they have chosen the correct party filer. Checking the association box will create an association link between that attorney and party.

(g) Upload Screen for PDF file

This screen permits the user to upload the PDF file to the CM/ECF System. The full path name of the file can be entered in the window or the user may choose the “Browse” button which activates the user’s browser dialog box (See [Section 5.2\(h\)](#)).

(h) Browser Dialog Box

This dialog box allows retrieval of the PDF file to upload. The user may have to work through several directories to locate where the PDF file was stored. That directory will then become the default directory during the remainder of the active session.

The “Files of type:” box defaults to HTML type files. To view PDF files, select “All Files” and search for the PDF document to upload. Highlight the file and hit “Open”. The user may also verify the actual document selected by highlighting it, right clicking, and selecting “open” from the drop down menu. Adobe Reader will launch and the file will be displayed. The full path name of the file will appear in the PDF file upload box. Hit “Next.”

(i) Multiple PDF Documents and Attachments

If there are no attachments, click on “Next”. If there are attachments (i.e, exhibits or attachments to the principle pleading which were created in separate word processing files), select “yes” at the “Attachments to Document” prompt. Select the type of attachment by selecting from the list below “Type of Attachment”. To more fully describe the attachment, click in the “Description” box and type in the description (See also [Section \(j\) Prompt Boxes](#)). At the prompt select the PDF filename of the document you are filing by typing in its full path name or click on “Browse” to search for that file. Then click on

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"Submit". If there are additional attachments, repeat this sequence for each one.

(j) Prompt Boxes

Throughout the program, users will see prompts for variable information. Prompt information is controlled by the event being posted. If variable information is not appropriate in the particular event or case, leave the prompt box empty. Information which is entered in the prompt box will be pulled into the docket text. In this example, the user would enter the receipt number provided by the Clerk's Office. Then hit "Next".

(k) Final Posting Screens

1. Text Modification Screen

The user will be allowed to enter additional docket text in certain places. Any user supplied text will appear in *italic type* on the docket sheet. (Note: Court Users have free text editing capabilities.) Hit "Next".

2. Prefix Box

Some events (i.e., Motions and Complaints) will have a prefix box containing a drop down list of document version identifiers which can be added before the event name. See [Appendix G](#) for the List of Prefix Types.

3. Final Approval Screen

This is the last opportunity for the user to review the entries. If there are errors, use your browser's *BACK* key to access the appropriate screen. Select "Next" when the transaction is complete and ready to transmit or, the user may cease the completion of the transaction by clicking on any of the menu selections visible across the top of the screen.

4. Notice of Electronic Filing

This screen will affirm that the document has been posted to the docket. The electronic document stamp is generated from the contents of the PDF file submitted and is proof of filing. This screen also displays which attorneys have been notified via E-mail of the submission. It also lists those attorneys or litigants who have not received electronic notification from the system. Court staff will send paper copies of court generated documents to those parties who did not receive electronic notification (i.e., unregistered attorneys) and to those attorneys who have sent notice to the Clerk of Court indicating their technical inability to receive electronic notification. (See [LR 83.1\(e\)](#)).

This screen may be printed. It is, however, saved by the system and may be

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viewed through the Docket Sheet Report. (See [Section 12.2.](#))

5.3 Other Types of Complaints and Civil Actions

The filing of these pleadings basically follow the same sequence of screens as those for the filing of an original complaint. The basic screen sequence is as follows:

- c Case Selection screen
- c Party Filer screen
- c Complaint Type screen
- c Party Filed Against screen
- c Upload screen for PDF file
- c Additional Effects screen
- c Text Modification screen
- c Final Posting screens

Some of these events and case types have unique processing routines. The Appendices and Exhibits of this User Manual include some of the different procedures.

5.4 Posting an Amended Complaint / Petition

To post an amended complaint or petition, follow the same steps as in posting an original complaint. When the complaint type screen appears, choose the appropriate event from the drop down list. Add newly named parties at the appropriate point in the transaction. If the party is an added plaintiff, they must be added at the Pick Filers Screen. If they are new defendants, they must be added at the pick "Against" party screen.